

THE
DOCTRINE
OF

Singular Obedience,

As the Duty and Property
of the True

Christian:

Opened & Applied.

In a SERMON, Preached

By J. Mather, D. D.

I Thes. V. 6.

Let not us Sleep as do others.

II Pet. III. 11.

*What manner of Persons ought you to be in
all Holy Conversation and Godliness?*

BOSTON in NEW-ENGLAND,
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TO THE
Reader.

F AITH and OBEDIENCE are the Two *Pillars* on which Religion stands. If either of them is wanting, that mans Religion is Vain. And yet the greatest part of those who pretend to Christianity, fail in one of these. It is Natural for *Adams* Children to seek for life by works and doings of their own, without a CHRIST. They would *find the Life of their Hand*. The Jews sought for Salvation in a *Legal way*, without depending on the Righteousness of Christ alone for Justification unto Life : But they attained it not. *Wherefore ? Because they sought it not by Faith, but as it were by the works of the Law*. Millions of men called *Christians*, have split upon the same Rock. The Obedience of CHRIST alone, has been or could be Meritorious. Papists (and such Popery is Natural) teach that
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To the READER.

their Good Works are Meritorious of Heaven it self. A Learned man among them was not afraid to say, That if God would give him Heaven *Gratis*, he would not accept of it so; but would first do something to deserve it. On the other hand; There are many who think to be Saved by a Faith which is not attended with Holiness or New Obedience. Such *Antinomians* there were in the Apostles Dayes: To Confute whom, James wrote his Epistle; in which he sayes, *What does it profit a man to say, He has Faith, & have not Works? Can Faith Save him? As the Body without the Spirit is Dead, so Faith without Works is Dead also.* In all Ages there have been multitudes of Professing Christians, who have in their Practice been no better than *Infidels*. And there seems to be more such in this than in former Generations. It is the sad apprehension of several late Authors, that the world was not more Degenerate before the *Universal Deluge*, than it is at this Day. One observes, That if we look through the world, of an Hundred Christians, Ninety Nine are either Heretical, or of Vicious Lives. I dare not think, (as a Late and Learned Writer believes) that of a Million of men down from

To the READER.

from *Adam* to our *Dayes*, scarce so much as One has been Saved. Our late *Political Arithmericians*, will not allow that there have been above One and Twenty Thousand Millions of men in the world, since the Creation. But certain it is, that more than Twenty One Thousand, yea, many Hundreds of Thousands are the Heirs of Salvation: For the Scripture speaks of them, as a *Great Multitude*, which no man can Number, *Rev. 7 9*. Nevertheless, Compared with those that Perish, they are but few. Yea, and in some Particular Churches, there are but few *Living Christians*: Altho' they may all have a Name to Live, *Christ* see-eth that their Works are not perfect, *Rev. 3 1, 2*. Which awful thought should make all Professors of Religion, all Church-members in special, careful to prove their real Christianity, by the Sincerity of their Obedience to the Commandments of *Christ*. To Excite hereunto, is the design of the Plain Discourse Emitted herewith; in which the Reader may not expect any thing Curious, or Elaborate; or set forth with *Excellency of Speech*. The Apostle says of himself, that his *Preaching was not with the Enticing words of mans wisdom*. Such a Pattern I

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desire;

To the READER.

desire to imitate. Plain Food is the wholesomest.

If the Reader would know the Reason why these Meditations are Published by the Press, it has been thus brought to pass : Certain Pious persons who Live in a Neighbouring Town, hapning to be present when this *Sermon* was Preached, were very importunate for a Copy of it, which having obtained from one that took it in Short-hand, I have Perused and Corrected what was brought to me by the *Printer*, and permitted him thus to Publish it. I shall not long trouble the world : But if I may leave any thing on the Earth, which shall be Profitable to any of the Elect of God, when I shall my self be no more seen or heard, let the Grace of God be Magnified, who has seen meet to improve one,

Who is Less

than the Least of Saints.

Boston, August

23. 1707.

INCREASE MATHER

Singular Obedience

The Property of a
True Christian.

Mat. V. xlvii.

-- *What do ye more than Others ?* --

THIS with the two following Chapters, contains the Substance of a most Heavenly Sermon, which our Lord Jesus Christ Preached to His Disciples. The beginning of the Chapter, informs us in what placé it was that Christ Preached. It was at a Mount : His Doctrine came from Heaven, the Mountain of Holiness : And a Mount was a proper place to declare it in. In the latter part of this Chapter, He gives an Exposition of the Moral Law ; He that gave the Law on Mount Sinai, Expounds that Law on a noth

nother Mount; and Vindicates it from those *Corrupt Glosses* which the Pharisees had put upon it. The Law sayes, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour; the Pharisees made an Addition to it, *viz.* That they might hate their Enemies: and that because the Law required Love to a Neighbour; therefore one not a Neighbour might be not loved, but be hated. Christ instructed His Disciples better. He taught them a Doctrine contrary to that of the Pharisees; namely, That they should love their Enemies: And this He Confirms by Two Arguments.

1. From the Consideration of that Common Love and Bounty which the Most High does manifest towards all men. So that in loving their Enemies, they would resemble the Blessed and Holy God, who shews kindness to the greatest Enemies that He has on the Earth. He makes His Sun to shine on the Evil, and sends Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust. Which instructs men that they should show kindness to their Personal Enemies.

2. Another Argument by which the Lord Confirms His Doctrine, is, That if they who were His Disciples should love their Friends only, they would do no more than

than the worst men in the world did. They would not out-do the Publicans. The *Publicans* were the *Collectors* of the Tribute due to the Emperor: The Chief Commissioners were Persons of Quality; they were Roman Knights; but they had inferiour Officers under them that would Oppress the People, and would Exact more than was by the Law appointed; and were therefore hated of all men. It was a Celebrated saying among the Jews, That no *Publican* shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Now (sayes Christ) if you Salute your Brethren; that is expresse Love to them only, you do no more than the Publicans; you do no more than those men you count the worst in the world: If you do no more than what the Pharisees instruct you in, you will be very defective in your Obedience. *What do you more?* e. more than others: *Ti Peristhon* said *Præstantius*: What Extraordinary thing do ye do? Wherein do you Excel? You that are Christs Disciples, ought to do more than Publicans and Pharisees do: And if you will approve yourselves as you ought to do, you will out-do them.

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The DOCTRINE to be insisted on from the words is,

That it is the Duty and Property of the true Disciples of Christ, to Out-do all other men in their Obedience to the Commandments of God.

There are Two Particulars before us to be Enquired into.

1. In what Respects it is the Duty and Property of Christians to Out-do all other men.

2. The Reasonableness of it.

QUEST. 1. *In what Respects is it the Duty and Property of the true Disciples of Jesus Christ, to Out-do other men?*

ANSW. 1. *In Respect of the Universality of their Obedience to the Commandments of God.* This is that that God does Require and Expect from those that are His Servants: Deut. 10. 12. *What does the Lord require of thee, but that thou shouldest walk in all His ways?* And as it is their Duty, so it is their Property. David could say, *I Esteem all thy Precepts.* And it is said of him, that he was a man after Gods own Heart, *to fulfill all His Will.* The like is spoken

poken concerning *Zechariah & Elizabeth*; *Luk. 1. 6. They walked blameless in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord.* And indeed this is the difference between the Sincere Servants of Christ, and those who are not so. An Hypocrite may comply with some, nay with many things that God does require: As it is said of *Herod*, that he did many things. And *Jehu* is a notable instance, who did some things and great things too, according to the Command of God; and yet he was not sincere in his Obedience, because there was one thing he would not do: God Commanded him to Execute judgment upon the House of *Ahab*, he did it readily; God Commanded him to Destroy the Worship of *Baal*, he did that too; but then he knew it was the Command of God that the Calves at *Dan* and *Bethel*, those Idols should be removed, but that did not comport with his carnal Interest, therefore he would not do it, which discovered the falseness of his Heart: *Jehu* took no heed to walk in the Law of God with all his heart. How did that appear? He did not turn from the Sins of *Jereboam*, 2 King. 10. 31. But the real Disciple of Christ is for doing all that God requires. And the truth

truth is, there is no man in the world that does duely observe all the Commandments of God, but only the true Believer on Jesus Christ. Wherefore He has said, *You are my Friends, if you do whatsoever I Command you,* Joh. 15. 14.

II. *It is the Duty and the Property of the true Disciple of Christ, to Out-do other men in respect of the Constancy of their Obedience.*

The Lord said of Solomon, that he should be Established in his Kingdom, if he would be Constant in keeping of the Commandments, 1 Chron. 28. 7. This is One Reason why the Covenant is called, *The Everlasting Covenant*. They have broken the Everlasting Covenant; For that Gods Covenant People are under Obligations unto Perpetual Obedience; and they that are Sincere in their Covenant with God, will practise accordingly. They have joyned themselves to the Lord in a Perpetual Covenant, never to be forgotten. Hence David said, Psal. 119. 112. *I have inclined my Heart to perform thy Statutes alway, even to the End.* There are Professors who are very inconstant in their Profession: They change their Religion just as the Times change. So it was with the Jews; Hos. 6. 4. *Thy Goodness is as the Morning Cloud*

and as the Early Dew it goeth away. The People generally would be of that Religion that was uppermost : they would be of the *State Religion*, let it be what it would. When there was a Good King, such an one as *Hezekiah*, they would be of the true Religion. When *Manasseh* came to be in the Throne, then they turned back to their Idolatry. When Godly *Josiah* was King, then they would be of the Reformed Religion ; but they turned to the Lord feignedly and treacherously, not with their whole heart : As was evident in that when *Josiah* was Dead, and his Ungodly Sons Reigned in his stead, the Body of the Nation soon revolted to their old Superstitions. Thus was their Goodness like the Morning Cloud and as the Early Dew, soon gone. And when men take up their Profession of Religion for Carnal Ends, and meet with Disappointments, it is very probable they will turn away from the Holy Commandment. The Apostle complains of *Demas*, 2 Tim. 4. 10. *He has forsaken me, having loved this present world.* Ecclesiastical writers tell us, That that *Demas*, of a Minister of Christ became a Priest of *Jupiter* ! There was more Money to be got by being a Priest of *Jupiter*, than by

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being a Preacher of the Gospel. If men begin their Profession in Hypocrisy, it is likely they will end in Apostasy : As it was with many of the pretended Disciples of Christ ; Joh. 6. 66. *Many of His Disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.* But it was not so with His true Disciples. Therefore when Christ said to them, *Will you go away also ?* Peter in the Name of all of them said, Lord to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of Eternal Life : *q. d.* We can never mend our selves let's go where we will. As for His true Disciples, nothing can move them from their steadfastness, no Temptation can turn them out of the way of Obedience : or if they do turn aside, they will soon return again ; *Psal.* 44. 17, -- All this is come upon us, nevertheless we have not dealt falsely in thy Covenant : Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way ; altho' thou hast broken us sore in the place of Dragons, and covered us with the shadow of Death. Thus then the true Disciple of Christ is constant in his Obedience ; he is the same man at all Times, in all Places, in all Companies. Fixed and Constant : wherever you find him, he is a God-fearing man.

III. *It is the Duty and the Property of the true Disciple of Christ, to Out-do others in respect of Passive Obedience.* In respect of a Profound Submission and Resignation to the Will of God, in whatever afflictive Dispensations of His Holy Providence may attend them: This Christ has taught His Disciples, not by Precept only, but by His Holy Example, Heb. 5. 18 *He learned Obedience by the things that he suffered.* When the greatest Agony that ever man endured was coming upon Him, He said, *Not my Will, but thy Will be done* This is the highest Obedience: For a man to Submit to the Will of God in Affliction, is a greater Obedience than to do what God Requires in a way of Active Obedience. We have notable Examples of this, not only in the New, but in the Old Testament Believers. Thus Abraham when God had given him a Son in a Miraculous way, for him now to part with that Son at the Command of God, was certainly a great tryal as of his Faith so of his Obedience. Nevertheless he readily complied, rising Early to perform what was Commanded him, Gen. 22. 3 Eli when Tydings was brought to him of dismal doleful Desolations coming on his Family, said, *It is the Lord, let Him do*

what seemeth Him Good. And David under great Afflictions said, 2 Sam. 15. 26. If the Lord say He hath no delight in me: behold here I am, *Let Him do to me as seemeth good to Him.* And the holy Prophets are recommended to us for our imitation herein; Jam. 5. 10. *Take the Prophets who have spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an Example of suffering Afflictions, and of Patience.* They were Patient under all the Afflictions that God did see meet to Exercise them with. It is the Property of a true Disciple of Christ, to make a comparative Choice of Affliction, that is of affliction rather than Sin; any thing rather than sin; Mat. 16. 24. If a man will be my Disciple, let him *take up his Cross.* If the case is so circumstanced, that he must either Sin or take up the Cross; then if he is a true Disciple of Christ, he will with his own hands take up the Cross. Thus did Moses, Heb. 11. 25. *He chose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of Sin for a season.* That now was Singular Obedience, to choose to be on the suffering side. Moses was Heir apparent to the Crown of Egypt, being the Adopted Son of Pharaohs only Daughter; but he chooses to part with all

the Honours & Riches of a Kingdom, & to suffer Afflictions with a poor People of God in a Wilderness. It is then the Property of a true Disciple of Christ, to be willing to suffer for His Name; yea, to rejoyce in it: As its said of the Apostles, *they Rejoyced that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for His Name*, Act 5. 41. The Martyrs loved not their Lives unto the Death. One burned to Death by Papists, for making a Profession of the Protestant Religion; *Alas (said he) have I but one Life to loose for Christ? If I had as many as Hairs on my Head, I should be glad to part with them all for Christ.* And the Primitive Christians were rather too forward, than too backward in this matter. When none accused them, they would some of them come before the Judges and accuse themselves of being Christians, that so they might Dye for the Dear Name of Jesus Christ.

IV. *It is the Duty of true Christians to Out-do others in respect of the manner of their performing Religious Duties.* True Christianity, Godliness in the Power of it, consists very much in the manner of performing Religious Duties. As now; In hearing the Word, Luk. 8, 18. *Take heed how you hear.*

Many hearers of the Word, never take heed how they hear ; if they come and hear, they think that is enough : But says Christ, Take heed how you hear ; take heed you do not hear after a careless manner ; take heed you do not hear in a drowsy and a sleepy manner but that you hear so as to profit by what you hear. It is the Character of a true Servant of the Lord to do so ; Mic. 2. 7. *Do not my words do good to them that walk uprightly ?* They that are upright in heart, will hear after such a manner as good shall come to them by what they hear. Thus also as to Prayer : There are many Professors of Religion will Pray constantly ; they will attend Publick Prayer, they will Pray in their Family every day ; and it may be in their Closets too, and yet all this meer Formality ; Mat. 15. 8. *They draw near to me with their Mouths, and honour me with their Lips, but their Hearts are far from me.* There are many that often Pray, but what is their Praying more than a Carcass of Religion, without any Life or Soul in it ? When as the true Servants of God his Heart is in Duty, Psal. 119. 10. *With my whole Heart have I sought thee.* The Sincere Christian seeks the Lord with his Soul, and with his Spirit

Spirit within him. His Prayer is not a meer formal dead thing ; No, he serves the Lord fervently. It is said of *Epaphras*, Col. 4. 12. *He Labours Fervently in Prayers for you.* So again as to the Sanctification of the Sabbath : There is an External Sabbath, that men who are not the true Disciples of the Lord will conform unto. The Jews were mighty Sabbatarians, as to an External observance ; they would not do any servile work on the Sabbath Day, they would dye first : But as to the *Internal Sabbath* they were strangers to it. But the true Disciple of Christ is for an Internal, as well as an External Sabbath : His care is, that his Heart be in a Sabbath frame when the Lords Day comes ; that he may be in the Spirit ; that he may have Communion with God therein. When the Sabbath comes he is glad of it, his Heart rejoiceth ; when the Sabbath is ended it is a trouble to him. *He calls the Sabbath a Delight, and does Honour the Lord in it, not speaking his own words, Isa. 58. 13.*

V. *It is the Duty & Property of the true Disciples of Christ, to Out-do others in respect of their Charity towards their Personal Enemies. They will love their Enemies ; they dare not take a Personal Revenge on a particular Enemy.*

Enemy. You see *David* would not, when he could easily have avenged himself, and those about him did importune him to it; but because of the fear of God he did it not. The Disciples of Christ should, and if they be true Disciples they will do so; they will show love to the greatest Enemies they have in the world: they will show their Love in Praying for them. This has Christ taught us, not only by Precept, but by His own Holy Example. As for the Jews that Crucified Him, He Prayed that God would forgive them; Luk 23. 34. *Father Forgive them, &c.* Stephen a true Disciple of Christ, when his Adversaries were stoning him to Death, he Prayed, *Lord, lay not this Sin to their Charge.* Yea, the true Disciple of Christ will not only Pray for his Enemies; but if he have an opportunity he will do them Good, as well as wish them Good: he will not requite Evil for Evil, but Evil with Good; Rom. 12. 20. *If thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink.* And indeed in this Precept of forgiving the greatest Injuries, our Christian Religion does Excel all other Religions. The Jews thought they might Revenge themselves, that they might hate their Enemies; and they counted

all that were not Jews to be their Enemies. Some of the Jewish *Rabbies* say of all Gentiles, as the Papists do of Protestants, That it is no more Sin to Kill one of them than to Kill a Dog. And the Philosophers among the Gentiles, altho' they taught Excellent Morality in many particulars; in this the greatest Moralists of them fell short in their Doctrine, and much more in their Practice. They taught, that if a man had sustained a little Injury he may do well to forgive it; but if a great One, they say he should not forgive it, but be revenged for it. Christ teaches His Disciples better than so. The Emperor *Julian*, justly Sir-named *the Apostate*, was a man of great Morality; with respect to this particular, he discovered that he had a Graceless Soul. He would Scoff at many Holy Sayings of Christ in this Sermon Preached at the Mount, and would particularly Deride at a mans forgiving his Personal Enemies. Well but the true Disciples of Christ will do it, tho' others cannot. Christians, would you not be glad to know whether you are true Disciples or no? This is one of the greatest signs of it that can be mentioned. If a Christian thinks with himself, God has forgiven me
greater

greater Injuries than ever I received from any man, therefore they that have been injurious to me, I will heartily forgive them! This is one of the greatest signs of a true Believer that can be.

VI. It is the Duty and Property of the true Disciples of Christ, to Out-do other men in respect of their hatred of, and opposition unto Sin. Ye that love the Lord hate Evil. If men love the Lord, they will hate the Evil of Sin more than any Evil whatsoever. They will not allow themselves in such sins, as other men do indulge themselves in. They are careful & watchful not only against sinful Deeds, but also not to sin in Words. The man that ruleth not his tongue, his Religion is vain. He only seems to be Religious. David sayes, I will take heed to my wayes, that I Sin not with my Tongue, Psal. 39. 1. Nay, the true Disciple of Christ is careful not to Sin so much as in his Thoughts: He hates vain Thoughts, much more vile ones. I hate vain Thoughts: but thy Law do I love, Psal. 119. 113. In a word; The true Disciple of Christ will refrain from every thing that he knows or thinks is a Sin against God; Psal. 119. 101 I have refrained my Feet from every Evil way. The true Disciple of Christ will not refrain

refrain from Greater Groffer Evils only, but from Lesser also; such as the world it may be, makes no Conscience of. There are some men that would be counted Christians, who will not Swear bloody Oathes, but will Swear such as they call *Petty Oathes*; they will Swear by their *Faith and Troth*. But Christ sayes to His Disciples, *Swear not at all*. Again; There are some that would be counted true Christians, they will not Blaspheme the Name of the Holy God, but they will take His Name in vain: At every turn they will say, *Lord Bless me!* And without any Reverence of that Fearful Name, they will say, *O Lord! O God!* Christ does not allow His Disciples to do so. And there are those that will use weighty Affeверations about trifling matters; they will say, *I Vow it is so: I Swear it is so*. Our Holy Lord Jesus Christ allows not His Disciples in such needless Affeверations. He sayes, Let your Communication be *Yea* and *Nay*, what is more is from Evil. Moreover, The true Servants of God will not only abstain from Sin themselves; but will bear a due Testimony against the Sins of the world about them. They will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of
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Darkness ; but reprove them rather : yea tho' they Expose themselves to the hatred of the world for it. Christ said unto some of His Natural Relations who were Ungodly men ; The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth ; because *I testify that the works thereof are Evil*, Joh. 7. 7. So will the Faithful Servants of Christ Testify against the Sins of the Times ; altho' it should Expose them to the rage of a Malignant world, and cost them their Lives. *John Baptist* did so ; and the holy Prophets did so. Therefore Stephen said to the Jews, *Which of the Prophets have not your Fathers Persecuted, and Slain them ?* Act. 7. 52. The Jews themselves own it : They tell us, That the Prophet *Isaiah* was sawn asunder for his Faithfulness in reprov- ing the Sins of King *Manasseh*, who was his near Kinsman ; And that the Prophet *Micaiah* had his Brains knock'd out by wicked men : That the Prophet *Jeremiah* was Murdered in *Egypt* ; and *Ezekiel* in *Babylon*, because they witnessed against the Sin of a wicked World. This is Singular Obedience.

VII. *It is the Duty and Property of the true Disciples of Christ, to Out-do others in Heavenly-mindedness, and in weanedness from the world.*

world. This does Christ require of His Disciples, Mat. 6. 19, 20. *Lay not up Treasures on Earth ; but lay up for your selves Treasures in Heaven :* Let your Hearts be there ; let your Treasure be there. This is proper to real Christians. It is said of the holy Patriarchs, Heb. 11. 13. *They desired a better Countrey ; that is an Heavenly one.* Ay, their hearts was there ; their hearts were not glued to this Earth. David could say he had *a weaned Soul*, Psal. 131. 2. His heart was taken off from the Riches and Honours of this world. And this is true of the Sincere Disciples of Christ, more than of other men : Other men their *Portion is in this world* ; therefore their hearts are set more upon Earth than upon Heaven. There is not an Unbeliever in this world, but if the Lord should say to him, Take thy choice, either come to me in Heaven ; or live on the Earth in all Temporal Felicity : he would chuse to live here for ever. But it is otherwise with the true Disciple of Christ ; he longs for Heaven. The chief reason of his willingness to abide here, is that he may do service for Christ. *For me (said the Apostle) to live is CHRIST.* If Christ should say to the Believer, Wilt thou

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thou come to me, or remain on the Earth he would say, Nay, Lord, let me be where thou art. He has by Faith seen that there is a better World than this : A World in which there is no Sin ; and he can't but love such a world ; a world where Christ is to be seen in all His Glory, and he can't but long to be there. There are his Thoughts, there is his Heart, there are the desires of his Soul. *I desire to be with Christ*, which is far better than to be in this world, Phil. 1. 23.

Thus we see that it is both the Duty and the Property of the Disciples of Christ to do more than others. We proceed to Enquire into the Reasonableness of it. I shall mention but Two Reasons briefly.

Reason 1. *God has done and will do greater things for Believers on Christ, than for any other men in the world.* Therefore they have infinite reason to study how they may do more for Him. There is not a true Believer in the world, but God has done glorious things for him. The Lord has given him that which is more Valuable than all Earthly Riches : He has given Grace to him : And the least dram of true saving Grace, is more worth than all the Silver

Silver and Gold and Jewels that this world does afford. Grace is more precious than Rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with it, *Prov. 3. 15.* As for the true Believer, God has Pardoned all his Sins, which were many. Suppose a man were deeply in Debt, if the Creditor should frankly forgive him all his Debts, would he not think that he could never do enough for one that has been so kind to him? And can we ever do enough for God, who has freely remitted our Infinite Debts, which it was impossible for us Ever to satisfy for? And yet the Law Condemned us to Prison until the utmost Farthing was paid. And if we are Believers on Christ, God has Adopted us to be His Children; *2 Cor. 6. 18. You shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* He will then give them a Glorious Inheritance, nothing less than a Kingdom. It may be, they are Poor Contemptible People, that make no figure in the world; yet they are Heirs of a Kingdom, Better & Greater than all the Kingdoms of the Earth, put them all together. *Jam. 2. 5. Has not God chosen the Poor of this world, Rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?*

Reason 2. *True Believers on Christ are able to do more in a way of Obedience, than others can.* That Principle of Grace which is wrought in their Souls, is a mighty thing. It is *Might in the Inner man*, Eph. 3. 16. Thence are they able to resist Temptation, so as others cannot. How did Godly *Joseph* resist great Temptations? *How can I do this wickedness, and Sin against God?* said he. If he had not had Grace in his Soul, such a Temptation would have overcome him. *Nehemiah* withstood such Temptations as few in the world would or could have done. It was because there was a principle of the Fear of God in his Heart; Neh. 5. 15. *So did not I, because of the Fear of God.* The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of Believers. He will not fail to assist them, if they do not Grieve Him: He will Enable them to mortify Sin so as others cannot; Rom. 8. 13. *If you through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the Body, you shall live.* The Holy Spirit will assist them in Duty, ver. 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our Infirmities.* He helps Believers to use such Arguments with God in Prayer, as will be sure to prevail: He Enables them to Pray with such Faith, and with such brokenness of Heart, and meltings of Soul,

Soul, as others are not acquainted with.

We proceed to the APPLICATION of the *Doctrine* thus far Cleared.

The First USE may be for INSTRUCTION, in several Particulars.

Instruct. I. *We may here see, that among Christians, there are but few true Christians to be found. Among Nominal Christians, but few Real Christians : For there are but few that Out-do others in their Obedience to the Commandments of God. They call themselves Christians, they are Christians in Profession, but in Practice like the rest of the world. Salvian complained of it in his time : He says, that Præter Paucissimos, excepting a very few indeed ; the generality of the Christian world was Sentina Victorum, a Sink of Vice and Sin. And is the world better now than it was in his time, above a Thousand Years ago ? Look over the Earth, and see if there be many Real Christians among those that bear the Christian Name. In the Eastern Nations there are Millions who are called Christians, but they are miserable Christians. In Africa, that great Continent, Three times as big as Europe, there are indeed now but very few that have the Christian Name, compared to what once there was. That*

part of the world once full of *Christians* is now overwhelmed with *Mahometans*. Yet about *Egypt* there are many Thousands of *Christians*, but miserable ones. And if we look on the *Greek Churches*, what lamentable *Christians* are they? Let us cast our Eyes upon *Europe*, there we may see more *Papists* (who are *Pagan-Christians*) than *Protestants*. They boast of the great multitudes of *Christians* they have made in *America*; they say as many as all the *Latin Church*: They pretend to Fourteen Millions, but they are most woful *Christians*. Then consider the *Protestant Nations*; How is it among them? As for the Generality of those that go under that Name, are there not such as destroy their *Christian Profession*, by a wicked Conversation? As to their *Morals*, they are not much better, than the *Papists*. It is so too generally. Blessed be God, who has put it into the Hearts of some Great Personages, as well as others, to promote *Reformation of Manners*. The Churches of the *Reformation* need *Reformation*. Among *Protestants*, Drunkenness, Profane Swearing, Sabbath-breaking, Unrighteousness, Vile Debaucheries, Covetousness are common Evils: Besides very many who maintain

maintain Fundamental Errors in Religion ; as do *Antinomians, Socinians, Quakers*, and such like, whose Heresies are Damnable. Alas ! For men to take up a Profession of Christianity is Easy ; there is no difficulty in that, when tis the General Profession of the Countrey, but to Practise, to live like Christians, that is Difficult : Therefore but few do so. So true is that word of Christ, Mat. 7. 14. *Strait is the Gate, and Narrow is the Way, that leads to Life, and Few there be that find it.*

Instruct. II. Hence then, there is an Holy Singularity that doth become the Servants of Christ. There is indeed a Singularity which is not to be commended : When men will not comply with the Laudable Civil Customs of their Neighbours ; when they will not conform to the Good Manners of the Christian world. You know there is a sort of men, that won't stir their Hats, nor bow their Bodies out of Civil Respect to their Neighbours ; no nor to any be they never so much their Superiors. Are they like *Abraham*, who Bowed himself to the Children of *Heth* ? Are they like *Jacob*, who when his Brother *Esau* was become a Great Man he called him Lord, and Bowed himself to the Ground seven times.

times before him? Are they like the Evangelist *Luke*, who when he Dedicated his History to *Theophilus*, who is thought to be a Noble man of *Antioch*, he calls him, *Most Excellent*? Are they like *Paul*, who when he defended himself before the Governour, called him, *Most Noble Festus*? But then there is an Holy Singularity, that is well-becoming the Faithful Servants of God: When men in matters of Religion do not do as the world does, nor do any thing at all, but what they have in the infallible Word of God a warrant for it; Rom. 12 2. *Be not Conformed to this world*; that is in matters of Religion. The Lord Jesus Christ would have His Disciples to be *Non-conformists* to the Corrupt Manners of the world. They may not live by such Rules as others do. It was wicked *Hamans* Complaint and Accusation against the Lords People, that they had *Laws diverse from all People, and that they did not keep the Kings Laws*, Est. 3 8. In matters of Religion, the Laws of God and not of the Emperor was their Rule. Thus then an Holy Singularity becomes the Servants of Christ: They must differ from a great part, yea, the greatest part of the world. They must be of more girt Conversations

Eph. 5. 16. *Walk Circumspectly.* *Acribos*, Precisely Endeavouring to come up to the height of the Rule. They must do as but few do; Rev 3. 4. *Thou hast a few Names.* They may not walk after the *Course of the world.* They must Swim against the Stream, and not be like Dead things, which go which way soever the Stream carries them. When the whole World was become an *Arian*, there was one *Arhanasius* against the whole World. But if a man acquits himself thus like a Christian, he will be counted a Fool. The world will say, *He is more Precise than Wise.* *Austin* sayes it was so in his time. Some Christians of an ill Life (he sayes) when they saw an Holy Christian, they would in a deriding manner say to him, *You are a John Baptist, are you not? You are for Heaven, no question of it!* But let them mock on. Christians ought to be *Precisians*. They ought to be men of more Conscience, and should have more of the Fear of God in them, than others have. *Noah* was a Singular man in his time. The Lord said to him, *Thee have I seen Righteous before me in this Generation,* Gen. 7. 1. He did not do as the most of men in that Generation, in which he lived were wont to do. And *Lot* was a Singular

lar man ; there were not Ten more such men to be found in Five Cities together as *Lot* was, so Singular was he in his Obedience. The Prophet *Elijah* was a Singular man. He sayes, I have been Zealous for thy Name, and *am left alone*. God indeed told him of Seven Thousand known to the Lord, who had not bowed to *Baal*. What a small number was that ? Seven Thousand in a Populous Nation ? Seven Thousand, to so many Hundreds of Thousand ; that could loose in one Battle Five Hundred Thousand. Well then, the Servants of God must be Singular in their Obedience ; yea, so as that the World shall wonder at them. It was said to *Joshua* the High Priest, *Thou & thy Fellows are men wondred at*. That they should venture to Build the Temple at such a time, their Faith and their Courage made them wondred at ; that they should set upon Building the Temple, when all the Powers of the world were set against them ; they were on that account men of an Holy Singularity, *Zec. 3. 8*.

INSTRUCT. III. *It is a sad thing, when men that call themselves Christians, do not Out-do others in that which is Good ; but it may be others Out-do them. It has been so, that*
some

some Infidels have Out-done many that call themselves Christians, in some Moral Duties. The Emperor *Severus* tho' a Pagan, was mightily taken with divers of Christs Precepts in this Sermon at the Mount. Especially that, *Do to others, as you would have others do to you.* How many Christians are there, that little regard that Holy Precept? What shall I say, that there have been those among *Mahometan Infidels*, that have Out-done most Christians in some Duties of Morality. A Late Writer speaks of one in *Constantinople*, that another coming to his Shop to Cheapen a Commodity; I can (said he) accommodate you with it, but my next Neighbour has it also; I have had a great deal of Custom to Day, my Neighbour has had none; therefore I wish you would go to him, that so my Neighbour may gain something as well as my self! This shames many Christians. Yea, and those Infidels are Constant in Prayers to God, tho' not in the Name of Christ; nevertheless they Pray to that God who made the world, commonly Five times every Day: And they look upon it as the greatest Disgrace that can be mentioned, for to say, such a man lives without Prayer. When two
Turkish

Turkish Infidels fell out, bitterly contending with one another; One of them that he might be sure to Disgrace his Adversary to purpose; said he, *That man there, has not Prayed to God so much as Once this Day* And for that he was looked upon as a horrid Wretch. But are there not Professed Christians in the world, that do not Pray to God so much as once in a Day? It may be there are some in this Assembly, that have not Prayed to God this Day: The Lord be merciful to them. Infidels will rise up in Judgment against them, and Condemn them in the Last Day. But especially, it is a sad thing when those that pretend to an higher Form, and greater Attainments than others in Religion, yet don't Out-do them in a holy walking before the Lord. It is sad when Church-members don't Out-do others in Holiness, and in Obedience to the Commandments of God. To those that make an higher pretence to Religion than others, what sayes the Prophet? *Hos. 4. 1. Tho' thou Israel play the Harlot; let not Judah Offend.* So the Lord sayes, If Professors at Large will indulge themselves in these and those Evils, let not Church-members do so. If other men indulge them

themselves in Drinking to Excess, do not
you who are Church-members do so. If
other men will Over-reach, and be Op-
pressive in their Dealings with their Neigh-
bours, you that are Church-members may
not do so. It is a sad thing, when the
world shall have occasion to say, Those
Church-members are like us; they squan-
der away their Time in Publick Houses
as much as we do: They speak as Vain-
ly and as Unprofitably as we when met
together. And there is one Duty which
many who are not Church-members attend,
but yet many who are so live in a sinful
Neglect of it: I mean that of attendance
upon the Lecture in this great Town:
Many that are not Church-members, come
to Hear and that constantly; but the
greatest part of Church-members seldom
or never come, altho' they have no reason-
able Excuse for their Neglect. It may
be the thoughts of it will be terrible on a
Death-bed. An Eminent Minister in *London*,
informed me of one, a great Professor
of Religion, a Member of a Congrega-
tional Church who came to a Tragical
End, but not long before his Death he
declared to that Divine, That it lay heavy
D upon

upon his Spirit, when he remember how seldom he went to hear a Lecture Sermon, tho' there was Excellent Preaching in the City, and near the House where he lived, yet he cared not to stir out Doors to Hear the Word of God. O Think of it ; and let not others who do not pretend to Religion so much as you do, Out-do you in any thing that is Good.

U S E II.

Let Believers be Exhorted to approve themselves Singular in their Obedience to the Commandments of God. And therefore to be often thinking what they may do for God, and to promote His Interest and Glory. Let us be often asking our own Souls Davids Question, Psal. 116. 12. What shall I render to the Lord ? Has God done Singular things for me, what shall I do for Him ? And let us set Christs Example before our Eyes. Looking to Jesus ; follow Him ; Let us walk as He walked. Our Lord Jesus Christ was always doing the things that please God : So should Christians Endeavour to do. Our Lord Jesus Christ went about doing

ing Good : When He came into this
and that Company, He would drop some
word or other whereby they might be
edified : So should it be with us. And
we Live as Christ Lived ; if we are Con-
formed to Him, what then ? Then we
may think of His Coming with Exceed-
ing Joy ; Then we may think of Death with
Exceeding Joy : Then we may think of
the Terrible Day of Judgment with
Exceeding Joy. I Conclude with
that Scripture, 1 Joh. 4. 17. *We*

*may have boldness in the Day of
Judgment, because as He
is, so are we in
this World.*

Amen !

FINIS.

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